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The following is a statement from Leonidas Ralph Mecham, Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts:

At the September 2005 meeting of the Judicial Conference of the United States, I announced that after more than 20 years as Director of the Administrative Office, I planned to advise new Chief Justice John Roberts that, following his confirmation, I would like to retire. I have agreed to remain in my position until a successor is in place. A search committee is now at work at that task, and the position was officially advertised on December 16.

As those close to me know, I previously had decided to retire over two years ago, then postponed my retirement because the Judiciary was in the midst of a debilitating financial crisis. A year ago I again planned to retire, but reconsidered in the face of Chief Justice Rehnquist's ill health.

I now feel I can retire without second thoughts or misgivings. The Judiciary has a new dynamic Chief Justice, and the federal court system has weathered its financial storm successfully. At the same time, a serious effort is underway to control Judiciary costs and spending.

While the salary disparity remains between judges and the private sector, in 2006 judges will receive their eighth consecutive Employment Cost Index adjustment. Since 1991, the Judiciary has secured 95 new courthouses, after decades of neglect compromised security and bedeviled attempts to modernize the work place. Newly constructed federal courthouses are efficient, economical, and architecturally pleasing.

I leave a nearly fully automated Judiciary that had just two mainframe computers and no personal computers when I began in 1985. A court-wide system to manage case files and allow electronic filing last month marked its ten-year anniversary, and is the model for courts around the world. Major court administrative functions that have been decentralized over the last 20 years are proving to be financially beneficial and management-wise for the Judiciary. We have developed a benefits program for the judicial branch that is superior to plans available in the executive or legislative branch.

There are many other successes within the Judiciary of which I am proud. I have been fortunate to serve the Judiciary at a time of great change and, in my own way, to help foster that change. It was a great honor to have served three Chief Justices, and to have headed what I repeatedly have called the finest agency in government – the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.

My goals throughout my tenure were good relations, openness, accountability and achievement, leadership, and service to the courts. I leave believing I have accomplished most, if not all of those goals.